

CONTEMPORARY SANSKRIT DRAMAS

Dr. Satya Vrat Sastri

Dramas has been a popular literary activity in Sanskrit since very early times. It still continues to be popular. The plays written in the twentieth century alone touch the high figure of three hundred. The honour of having written published and staged the maximum number of Sanskrit dramas in the present century is shared equally by Shri Shrijiva Nyayatirtha, referred to above, and Shrimati Leela Row Dayal wife of the late Shri Harishwar Dayal, Indian Ambassador to Nepal and daughter of the celebrated Sanskrit writer of Maharashtra Shrimati Kshama Row, whose most of the poems she has dramatised. Next to Shri Shrijiva Nyayatirtha and Shrimati Leela Row Dayal stands the late lamented Dr. J.B. Chaudhuri who too has written, twenty-two plays and in this respect shares the honour equally with Shri Shrijiva Nyayatirtha and Shrimati Leela Row Dayal but only twelve of his dramas have so far seen the light of the day. His devoted wife Shrimati Roma Chaudhuri is now producing as of his plays as are unpublished and is trying to bring them out one by one. Shrimati Roma Chaudhuri is herself a Sanskrit playwright and has written and published plays like Sankarsankaram.

Dr. Raghavan has written twelve plays which are remarkable in more ways than one. Coming from the pen of one of the world's greatest Indologists they have a touch of his profound learning and penetrating intellect. That he could produce so many dramas alongwith his numerous writings on other branches of literature speaks volumes for his superhuman energy and capacity for hard work.

Shri Jaggu Vakulabhushan too has written twelve plays only four of which so far he has been able to publish. Generally he has written his plays as the Purva or Uttara bhagas of the well-known ancient Sanskrit plays e.g. Adbhutamsukam as the Purvabhaga of the Venisamhara, Prasannakasyapam as the uttarabhaga of the Abhijnanasakuntalam and so on.

The late Sri Y. Mahalinga Sastri has written and published ten Sanskrit plays. He is at his best in humour which is very often pungent and incisive. Out of his ten plays six are farces.

Bhatta Mathura Prasad Dikshit and Shri S.B. Velankar have to their credit 5 plays each.

During my study some other interesting facts have come to light. There are writers who have written just one type of dramas only. Thus Shri Nirpaje Bhima Bhatta has written only political plays : Kasmirasandhanasamudyamah on the problem of Kashmir and Hyderabadavijayam on the merger of Hyderabad, both published in the Amrtavani of Bangalore, Shri Mulshankar Manek Lal Yajnek only historical plays : Samyogitasvayamvaram, Pratapvijayam and Chatrapatisamrajyam on the historical personalities like Prithviraj Chauhan, Rana Pratap Singh and Chatrapati Shivaji and Shri S.B. Velankar only political plays : Kalidasa-caritam, Kalindi, Kailasakampah and Svatantryalaksmih, the only exception if it can at all be called an exception, being the Sangitasaubhadram which is a rendering in Sanskrit of the Marathi play of the same name by the celebrated Marathi playwright Annasaheb Kirloskar.

There are a few others who have kept up their accent in one line deviating from it only occasionally. Among them we may mention Shri Haridasa Siddhantavagisa of Calcutta, three out of his four plays Mivarapratapam, Sivajicaritam and Vangiyapratapam are historical while the fourth one the Virajasarojni has an imaginary theme, Dr. J.B. Chaudhuri, again of Calcutta, twenty one out of his twenty two plays are devotional in character dealing with mythological or saintly beings, the twenty second the Mahimayabharatam, dealing with Community Development projects, Bhatta Mathura Prasad Dikshit, three out of his five plays are historical, Virapratapanatakam, Gandhivijayam and Bharatavijayam and the rest of the two Bhubharoddharanam and Sankarvijayam being mythological.

In my study of contemporary Sanskrit dramas one thing that has struck me most is that the maximum activity in this direction has taken place in Eastern Western and Southern India only. Big names in the field of contemporary Sanskrit dramatic literature such as those of Dr. V. Raghavan, Sri Y. Mahalinga Sastri, Sri Jaggu Vakulabhushan, Shrimati Leela Row Dayal, Sri S.B. Velankar, Dr. J.B. Chaudhuri, Sri Haridasa Siddhantavagisa, Sri Shrijiva Nyayatirtha, Mahamahopadhyaya Kalipada Tarkacharya - all belong to these areas. Between them, these areas account for a little over two third of the entire literary activity in contemporary Sanskrit drama. The city of Calcutta itself accounts for more than sixty Sanskrit plays 50 by the four writers alone - Shri Shrijiva Nyayatirtha, 22; Dr. J.B. Chaudhuri, 22; Shri Haridasa Siddhantavagisa 4; and Mahamahopadhyaya Kalipada Tarkacarya 3,

and the rest by the miscellaneous writers, Maharashtra and Gujarat account for some sixty plays, fifty by five writers alone - Shrimati Leela Row Dayal 22, B.G. Dhok 9, Mahamahopadhyaya Shankar Lal Maheshwar 8, S.B. Velankar 5, Shri Mulshanker Maneklal Yajnik 3, Skand Shankar Khot 2 and the rest by miscellaneous writers.

Madras, Mysore, Andhra and Kerala account for some 70 plays 40 by four writers alone - 12 by Dr. V. Raghavan, 12 by Sri Jaggu Vakulabhushan, 10 by Sri Y. Mahalinga Shastri, 3 by Sri V.K. Tampi and 2 by Sri K.T. Pandurangi and the rest by miscellaneous writers. I need not go into the causes of this as to why so much of activity in contemporary Sanskrit drama came to be concentrated in these areas only. This may just be taken as one of the freaks of history. Or else how can one explain as to why there is not even one noted contemporary Sanskrit playwright in states like Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Haryana, whose contribution to other forms of literature in Sanskrit is quite substantial.

Now a word about the new trends and tendencies that mark out the new Sanskrit drama.

It is these which point to the lack of rigidity in it and the development in it of a pliability which goes well with a class of literature which is growing and prospering, incorporating into it many changes and yet maintaining a continuity with the past.

Bharata lays down the use in a play of Prakrits by certain characters like women, jester, servants etc. This was when
Digitized by Sambit Patnaik

Prakrits were spoken and understood alongwith Sanskrit. Sanskrit playwrights in obedience to this rule made Prakrits an essential and inseparable part of their plays even long after Prakrits had ceased to be effective media of expression.

Sanskrit continued to be patronized by people (though their number was not very large) while Prakrits comparatively fell into disuse. Of late a tendency is visible in Sanskrit dramas either to avoid Prakrits or to replace them with modern varnaculars. In his Bhubharoddharanam Pt. Mathura Prasad Dikshit puts Hindi, in place of Prakrits. In another of his plays the Bharatavijayam he uses Newari (the language of Nepal) instead. In the Paniniyanatakam and the Narijagarananatakam Pt. Gopala Shastri Darsanakesari employs Bhojpuri in place of Prakrits.

With regard to Sanskrit too there is a tendency to shed off puritanism and incorporate into it certain foreign words either by Sanskritizing them, as for example, prataila for petrol or adopting them as they are, as for example, badminton, tennis, police, radio, station, bus, etc.

In technique too some Sanskrit dramas present a break with the past. Like the western dramas the acts have now come to be divided into scenes. The examples are the Karunaparijatam of Sri Sudarshan Pathi, Lalavaidym of Sri Skanda Shankar Khot, and the works of Dr. J.B. Chaudhuri. The Nandi and the Bharata-vakyam once an indispensable part of a drama have now come to be dropped. The trend is now visible which considers Prastavana to be superfluous. On account of the increasing preoccupations

of the modern age the playwrights in all languages are inclined to write shorter plays, especially, one act plays, to entertain the audience. The Sanskritist too is not unaffected by this tendency. The one act plays, once rare, have become more frequent. Radio plays too have now come to be written and broadcast over the various stations of the All India Radio.

Gone are the days when a Sanskritist looked to the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, or the Puranas only for his themes. With his creative intellect freed from the shackles of tradition by the very force of the age he is constantly in quest of newer and newer themes and has no dearth of them when he casts a floating glance at the vast canvas of history. There is a growing tendency among Sanskrit scholars to adopt the burning problems of the day as their themes. It is as a result of this that we have come to have such plays as Kasmirasandhanasamudiyamah and Hyderabadavijayam by Sri Nirpaje Bhima Bhatt on the problems of Kashmir and the merger of Hyderabad respectively. Susamhatabharatam by Sri P. Ramchandrudu on the problem of integration of India, Kailasakampah by Sri S.B. Velankar on the recent event of the Chinese aggression on India, and Mahimayabharatam, a play on the community Development projects by Dr. J.B. Chaudhuri. On the social problem of dowry we have a play Parivartanam by Kapiladeva Dvivedi and on the awakening among Indian women Nariagarananatakam by Pt. Gopala Shastri Darsanakesari. On the little out of the date topic of Hindu Code bill we have a play Vidhiviparyasam by Sri Shrijiva Nyayatirtha. "Gandhian philosophy has apparently inspired Sudarshan Pathi in his

Karunaparijatam wherein he refers to plough and the charkha as the twin weapons for the destruction of the object poverty of the teeming millions of India and speaks of the awakening among Adivasis and the establishment of the Panchayat Raj." In Bharatavijayam we have a complete history of India from the coming of the East India Company down to the attainment of independence in 1947. In Parinamah of Pt. Chudanath Bhattaraya, a tragedy in contravention of the rules of Bharata, we have a very illuminating discussion on the philosophy of such western stalwarts as Kant and Hegel as also on Communism, Socialism and Democracy showing the author's intimate knowledge of the various systems, Eastern and Western.

There is an increasing awareness on the part of modern Sanskritists to enrich Sanskrit with Indian and foreign classics or their adaptations. It is this which is responsible for giving us the Sanskrit translations of the plays of a great Western playwright like Shakespeare, which have been described in detail by Dr. V. Raghavan in Indian literature of the Sahitya Akademi. Dr. Shama Shastri of Mysore translated into Sanskrit the German play Amelia Galetti by the well-known German writer Lessing.

Among the adaptations we may mention S.N. Tadapatrikar's Visvamohanam which is based on Goethe's immortal classic, The Fuast. Similarly based on the Cup of Tennyson is the Kamalavityayanatakam of Venkataramanayya. Among the translations or adaptations of the Indian classics mention may be made of the translations in Sanskrit of Tagore's plays referred to in

the bibliography in Samskrita ravindram, the Special Number of the Samskrita Pratibha edited by Dr. V. Raghavan.

Unmattakicakam, a Sanskrit rendering by K.S. Nagarajan of the wellknown Kannada classic Kicakam by Tyagaraja Paramasiva Kailasa and Sangitasaubhadram, a Sanskrit rendering by S.B. Velankar of the original Marathi play of the same title by Annasahab Kirloskar. The very recent play Prthvivallabham by Sri Balakrishna Limaye has for its theme one of the Gujarati stories of Sri K.M. Munshi.

Before I conclude I would do well to stress that the Sanskrit dramatic literature produced in this country in the present century is too vast and magnificent to deserve serious study, more so, because it is sure to bring us face to face with the urges and aspirations of the contemporary Sanskrit playwrights and at once enthuse and inspire even the hardest pessimist about the glorious present and the still glorious future that awaits the Sanskrit language.

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Love in Modern Poetry (Sanskrit)

There are certain basic emotions in living beings. Love is one of them. It is the thread that binds, that unites, that welds. Nature has bestowed it on all creatures. Even birds and animals are not free from it. For human beings it has greater relevance for they have the quality of thinking in them. It has different forms: love between parents and offsprings, between husband and wife, between a lover and a beloved, between friends and so on. As are the different forms so are the different names for it. Love of mother and father for their son or daughter is vatsalya, love between relatives is sneha, or prema, between husband and wife is prema, between a lover and a beloved is pranaya. The love of a devotee for his God is bhakti. Obviously all these are the different manifestations of that basic instinct in man that goes by the name of love.

Of all these different manifestations the one between lover and beloved or between husband and wife that have been treated the most in literature, including the Sanskrit literature because of the attraction, again a natural phenomenon, towards members of the opposite sexes and the titillating effect that it produces. Some of the world's best poetry is romantic indeed.

When we talk of Sanskrit literature the vision that is conjured up before us is that of an old literature that existed upto above the middle ages. How erroneous this idea is can be seen from the large corpus of literature produced in Sanskrit in the current century itself. A look at it from the point of view of love poetry is, therefore, worthwhile and rewarding.

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Out of many works in Sanskrit of the modern period we first take up the Kavibharatikusurenjali a representative collection of Sanskrit poems which furnishes many charming examples of love poetry. A poet Shri Jagan Nath Shastri describes in it the divine love between Rādhā and Krsna in the verse:

प्रदीपे रुद्राद्युम्ना रथा लोकेन्द्रियात्मा एव
शीरापिणी वृषभे शीरापिणी मनसि विचलनासि पा
चारा धरो जगतिरहाराम विष्विनि सा रात्रिं दारुद्वयाना
नीरात्रे देव तमुराराति ता उद्युक्तारात् ते किरातिला ॥

Radhika, the most beautiful with body like milk, heart like water, speech like parrot, with brilliance like the lightning of the cloud, with glances like arrows attracted Krishna and he captured her in his heart's prison.

Though having Rasabhasa, the semblance of sentiment, the following verse by Shri Pattachiram Shastri describes love sports of a male and a female bee.

कान्तिलाभलित दीलां लालमानां भरन्ति -
मधुरं पुरुषसुन्दरं गुरुनां दो विलक्ष्यन्ते ।
ग्रस्तुतुर्मिति तिलीनां लालिमानां गुरुनां
कुरुकाति रुद्रं शुद्रं रुद्रात्मां नाय लालु ॥

The he-bee is searching for its beloved to have the treat of drinking flower juice together, his swing is being swung by the fragrant air, he is brought up with juice of flowers and is hiding behind the flowering bushes just to mock at her lover.

A lady in similar condition is described by a poetess Kamala Chunekar in the verse:

महाराजा के नदी पर बैठती है विद्युत की तरफ आपने अपने लोगों
के लिए उपलब्ध करवाया है औ वह उन्हें बहुत खुशी के साथ देती है।
उसके लिए वह अपने लोगों के लिए उपलब्ध करवाया है।
महाराजा के नदी पर बैठती है विद्युत की तरफ आपने अपने लोगों के लिए उपलब्ध करवाया है।

Lover being fisherman, is busy catching fish far in the sea. Night is dark, tide is high. Though there are innumerable obstacles in the dark still the beloved has to go to her lover. The kind-hearted dark cloud at once spreads light.

Occasionally the modern Sanskrit poet puts in Sanskrit even some of the well known love verses of Urdu. This is precisely what has been done by Pandit Guru Dayalu Sharma in his Kavyamrtadhara. He renders the Urdu verse; [into Sanskrit as:

दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि
दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि ॥
दृष्टि ॥
दृष्टि ॥

Though the eyes are full of tears still the heart burns. What a disgrace! The house is burning in rainy season.

Somewhat like punarvasu :

दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि ॥
दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि ॥

Indo - Sanskrit :-

दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि ॥

There is no control over love. The fire of love has peculiar qualities. It does not kindle when ignited, does not get extinguished when tried to be extinguished. Shri Baluk Nath Shastri in his poem in the Kavibharatikusumanjali fancies the night as a love stricken lady trying to entice her beloved, the moon.

ग्रन्थालय
ग्रन्थालय
ग्रन्थालय
ग्रन्थालय

The moon-faced lady night who has just got up and is wearing the attire of dew with printing of hundred flowers welcomes her beloved with sweet smile and honey.

Prof. B.R. Sastry in his Vikrantabharatam describes vividly and in most poignant words the condition of a lovelorn lady:

मैं देख रहा हूँ कि आप कहाँ गए हैं? मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ।
मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ। मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ।
मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ। मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ।

I saw you in my dream, O dear, where have you gone leaving me, without looking at me. Why is this cruelty upon your beloved? Have pity on my plight. O beautiful! your eyes are big, with smiling face, sweet voice, attractive form, O the master of my life, I always remember your fascinating charms. Do you remember our meeting in the dream. When will you have mercy on me? When can I see you? O my love I do not like this life without you. Come quickly.

मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ। मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ।
मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ। मैं आपकी तरफ से बहुत प्यासा हूँ।

Prof. Satya Vrat Shastri in his Sribodhisattvacaritam the story of Unmadanti form the Buddhist Avadanas in his Mahakavya Sribodhisattvacaritam. The piece is a beautiful example of Śrngararasa. The beauty of Unmadanti is maddening:

सद्गुणं देवीं दृष्टिं देवीं
राते दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि
राते दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि
दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि ॥

Unmadanti had her teeth like the flower buds. She excelled Rati, the consort of Kamadeva, she captured heaven, she made all people stricken with love. Like a nymph she would infatuate them. It was no wonder then that a king passing by her should lose all self control at the very first sight and sigh aloud?

गुणं देवीं दृष्टि देवीं
दृष्टि दृष्टि दृष्टि ॥

Love poetry in modern Sanskrit literature, as should be clear from some of the examples cited above, is quite rich and varied. It has an appeal of its own which goes straight to the heart.

